

Supporting Families Changing Futures

2019–2023

The Queensland Government's plan for helping Queensland children, young people, parents and families experiencing vulnerability



**Queensland
Government**



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Agency abbreviations used in this document

DPC	Department of the Premier and Cabinet	DESBT	Department of Employment, Small Business and Training
DCS	Department of Corrective Services	DHPW	Department of Housing and Public Works
DCSYW	Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women	DJAG	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
DYJ	Department of Youth Justice	QH	Queensland Health
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships	QPS	Queensland Police Service
DCDSS	Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors	OPG	Office of the Public Guardian
DCPL	Director Child Protection Litigation	QFCC	Queensland Family and Child Commission
DoE	Department of Education	QMHC	Queensland Mental Health Commission
		QT	Queensland Treasury

All statistics referenced in this document are sourced from Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women corporate data unless otherwise indicated.

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Department of Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
Locked Bag 3405, Brisbane QLD 4001

www.csyw.qld.gov.au



Message from the Minister

Children, young people, parents and families experiencing vulnerability face immense challenges and can be caught in a cycle of disadvantage that affects their health and limits their education and employment opportunities.



We want to enable and support them to change their future and break that cycle. We want them to prosper, be resilient and thrive.

We have made great progress towards these goals.

This year sees us at the half way point of a 10-year program to reform the family support and child protection system.

We are investing over \$1.3 billion annually to support families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability and we recently committed a further \$517.5 million (\$401.6 million in new funding and \$115.9 million in internal funding) over four years to continue the reform journey.

Our family support services are achieving great successes with over 20,000 families helped so far and we have restored and strengthened our child protection system to keep children and young people safe and well.

Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities (Our Future State) outlines our commitment to helping Queensland families, children and young people — particularly those experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage — to flourish and excel in their lives.

To help us meet the goals of *Our Future State*, we have developed *Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019-2023*. This whole-of-government strategy provides the framework for the next five years and outlines our focus areas and the activities we will take to help our families protect and care for their children and ensure that children and young people in care prosper.

A key focus over the next five years will be to embed a unified system of support for families, children and young people when they need help. Only by taking a whole picture view, with families at the centre, will we be able to meet their wide-ranging needs — from housing and health, to education and employment.

Through this strategy and *Our Way*¹ — our 20-year generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families — we will build on our work to reduce the level of disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child protection system.

Helping our children, young people and families is everyone's responsibility. We all have a collective responsibility to come together and strengthen the support networks of our families, children and young people.

We will continue to advocate for a better deal for Queenslanders from the Australian Government in key areas that reduce risks to children — housing, domestic and family violence, drug misuse, mental health and disability support — as well as better support for carers.

You can help — by becoming a foster carer or a Child Safety Officer, through volunteering in your community or by encouraging friends, families and neighbours to seek help when they need it, or, simply by taking action when you see an issue regarding families, children or young people.

Through a shared approach to helping families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability we can help them become resilient, overcome hardships, and change their futures for the better.

Together we can give our Queensland families, children and young people the opportunity to shine.

Hon Di Farmer MP

Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence



The last five years

We are at the half-way point of a 10-year reform journey. As at 30 June 2019, 107 of the 121 Inquiry recommendations have been delivered with the remaining 14 underway.

The past five years have been about designing and building a responsive and flexible family support and child protection system that provides the right services at the right time to help families, children and young people when they need support.

We have also seen challenges emerge such as the devastating impact of methamphetamine (typically ice),

and greater focus on the impacts of domestic and family violence on families and children.

We are seeing great results — families experiencing vulnerability now receive more support, which is helping to keep families together. When children are unable to remain safely with their families, we have enhanced our supports to better meet their needs while in care.

Some of the key achievements along the journey so far:





2017

Government begins transfer of support services for foster carers to non-government sector

17 Family and Child Connect Services (FaCC) and 44 Intensive Family Support Services rolled out across the state to assist families get help sooner

Hope and Healing Framework developed and implemented across the residential care sector in partnership with Peakcare

Government releases *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families* and *Changing Tracks: An action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families*¹

Government initiates responses to QFCC review into blue cards and the foster care system⁵

\$200 million funding over four years allocated to employ 292 more child safety staff

Implementation of the Partners in Care Report developed in partnership with Foster and Kinship Care Queensland and foster and kinship carers⁶, begins

Roll out of integrated service responses and multi-agency high risk teams to address domestic and family violence in Queensland, starting with the Logan-Beenleigh site, the first of eight high risk teams to be established

2018

Total funding for the reform program increases to \$437.3 million over 5 years (from 2014-15)

Queensland Health and Primary Health Networks partnership delivers digital health pathway and communities of practice to strengthen health assessments for children in care

12 Child Safety Officers placed to liaise with health services to improve and facilitate pathways for better health for families and children in care

33 family wellbeing services opened across Queensland to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the child protection system

Government accepts recommendations from Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse⁷

Government funds 56 more Child Safety frontline and support staff, adding to 365 positions created since 2016

Campaign to curb supply of the drug Ice and treat those who need help is part of \$100 million *Action On Ice* plan

Child protection legislation reforms come into effect

Court Liaison Officers start in Brisbane and Townsville Childrens Courts to assist young people of compulsory school age to engage in education and to reduce youth offending

Queensland First Children and Families Board established as part of government's commitment to closing the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Further specialist Childrens Court Magistrates appointed, bringing the total to 14 appointed across Queensland

Government commits \$517.5 million (\$401.6 million in new funding and \$115.9 million in internal funding) over four years (from 2019-20) to continue the family support and child protection reforms



Where we are now

Early intervention

What we know

Family complexity — mental illness, domestic and family violence, criminal history and drug and alcohol use — is increasing in households where there are child protection concerns.

Our family support system is working to meet the needs of parents and families earlier, and families who have completed a family support service intervention are less likely to be investigated by Child Safety in the future.

70% of children exposed to substantial harm or risk of harm are not on track against the Australian Early Development Census at five years of age compared to 43% of children not exposed to harm.⁸

What families, parents, children and young people say

Families experiencing vulnerability need help with:

- parenting skills and nurturing
- mental health or emotional problems
- social support
- domestic, family and sexual violence prevention
- managing their finances
- physical health problems or disabilities
- recent drug or alcohol misuse
- getting safe, stable and affordable housing
- getting or keeping a job
- helping their children reach developmental milestones

Parents feel isolated in navigating services across different agencies.

What key stakeholders and peak bodies say

- We need local solutions — with flexibility to respond to local conditions.
- More specialist training and trauma-informed approaches are needed to support those who are working with increasingly complex families. Retention strategies are needed and sector capacity needs to be increased.

- We need to continue to enhance and expand community-led Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander responses to address the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, parents and families in the child protection system.
- We need to do better in promoting family support and increase community confidence in the family support services system to combat the perception that only by referring to Child Safety will a family get help.
- ‘Silo mentality’ thinking and responses are still a big issue — we need ‘whole picture’ awareness of parents and children and connected responses from multiple agencies and organisations.
- We need to continue to focus on and enhance early intervention services to help parents and families sooner to keep parents, families and children together.
- We need to listen to the views of parents, families, children and young people to better respond to and address their needs.

The situation today

An average of 92 enquiries are made to Family and Child Connect services every day.

An average of 336 children are reported to Child Safety every day, and of these 70 are assessed as requiring investigation.



79% of reports from mandatory reporters continue to be lower level concerns that could be more appropriately referred to family support services.

An average of 11 children every day are assessed by Child Safety to have been significantly harmed or at risk of significant harm, and in need of protection. Five of these will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

92% of investigations requiring the most urgent response commence within 24 hours.

Where we need to do better

Raising the profile of our family support services to increase the number of families receiving the right services at the right time, including continuing to work with our mandatory reporting agencies to better direct families to the most appropriate support services.

Continuing to build the family support system to increase its reach and effectiveness, including strengthening and supporting the workforce to build their skills and retain their experience.

Providing connected services — parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability need holistic, whole-of-government responses to meet their needs.

Responding to the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system and ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children.

Julie and Simon, a young Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander couple, were referred to the early intervention **Sure Steps program** when they were expecting their first child.

The couple had recently moved into a public housing property and this was their first experience of living independently after a history of homelessness. They had limited family support or financial resources to prepare for the birth of their child.

Through Sure Steps, Julie and Simon completed a parenting course and their baby is healthy and meeting developmental milestones. They have been supported to complete their driver training and Julie is completing a Certificate III in Early Childhood Education with her goal of a tertiary degree in Childhood Education clearly in sight. Simon is exploring employment opportunities in the Australian Defence Force and both continue to work on their relationships and their long-term plan to move out of public housing and into the private rental market.



Sure Steps is an early intervention program supporting families living in public housing to remain safe, secure and stable. It is delivered in Logan by community organisation YFS Ltd and is funded by the Department of Housing and Public Works. The program started in July 2017 with an evaluation to occur in 2020.



Where we are now

Care

What we know

The average length of time children and young people spend in care is 5.4 years.

28% of children in care display major to significant difficulties with emotional stability.

Education outcomes for children in care worsen as they get older — at Year 3, 84.3% of students in care met the NAPLAN minimum standards for writing compared to 95.5% for all Queensland students. By Year 9 only 39% of students in care met the NAPLAN minimum standards for writing compared to 77% for all Queensland students.

Fewer than half of young people in care complete Year 12 and fewer than 10% receive an OP.

Fewer than 5% of children subject to a child protection order are also subject to a supervised youth justice order.

Approximately 80% of age-eligible children in care are participating in kindergarten.

What children and young people say

- 90% of Queensland children in care feel safe and secure.
- Nearly 90% of children in care can identify a person they feel they can rely on in future — in most cases this person is their carer.
- Two-thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care do not feel connected to culture.
- Children and young people in residential care have a harder time accessing activities than children in family-based care.
- Almost half of children in care want more contact with their family and the majority want to be placed with their siblings.⁹

What key stakeholders and peak bodies say

- We should focus more on safely reunifying children with their parents or family, and working better with parents or family to achieve this, including during and post reunification.
- We should support carers and provide them with access to training and wrap-around supports that best meet their needs.
- We should explore models of care instead of placement options to better respond to the increasing complexity of children's needs and keep siblings together.
- More needs to be done to improve connection to culture and community for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care.



The situation today

There are nearly 10,000 children and young people in care in Queensland and approximately 5,300 carer families.

44% of children and young people in care live with kinship carers. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care, 41% live with kinship carers.

71% of children and young people in care are placed with their siblings.

95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care have a cultural support plan.

42% of children and young people in care are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Where we need to do better

Increase reunification efforts to keep parents and families together with their children at home, including better cross-agency responses to ensure successful reunification.

Design a care system that can meet the increasing complexity of children's needs, keep siblings together and address pressure demands on the system.

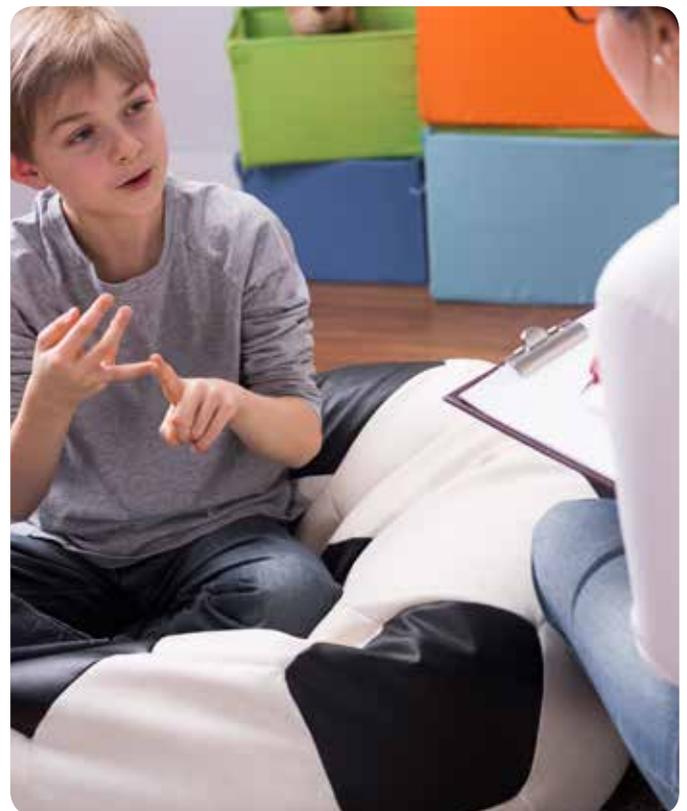
Increase stability of living arrangements for children in care and engage with children and young people on decisions affecting them.

Improve training for carers to better meet the needs of children and young people in care and increase support to retain our carers and benefit from their valuable experience.

Reduce the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child protection system and ensure uninterrupted and increasing connections to kin, community and culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care.

Improve education outcomes for children and young people in care.

Continue workforce strategies to strengthen the skillsets of staff and provide an engaged, flexible workplace to retain our skilled staff.





Where we are now

Transition

What we know

Around 46% of young people in care who complete Year 12 do not go on to learn or earn in the following year.

Around 16% of young people who were in care will themselves have a child in care at some point in the future.

Around 35% of young people who were in care move five or more times in the first 12 months of leaving care.

Around 63% of homeless youth have a state care history.¹⁰

What young people say

- Young people worry most about budgeting and managing finances, finding accommodation and obtaining and holding a job when they exit care.
- Children and young people are most likely to share their concerns regarding transitioning from care with their carers.
- Young people exiting care need a person in their corner who believes in them.
- Support needs to be focused on resilience, confidence and aspirations, not just survival.⁹

What key stakeholders and peak bodies say

- We should increase our efforts in the lead-up to the transition years and afterwards to help young people exiting care successfully transition to adulthood.
- We need connected responses across government to meet the needs of young people and to help them achieve independence.

The situation today

77% of 16 year olds and 90% of 17-year-olds in care have a Transition to Adulthood plan.

Almost 3,000 young people who exited care have accessed Next Step After Care services since 2015.

Where we need to do better

Determine what works best — with support for young people exiting care now available until they are 25 years of age we need to determine what types of support best meet their needs and will result in the best outcomes.

Provide connected services — young people exiting care need support across a range of agencies.

Break the cycle of disadvantage — work is needed to increase access to education, training and genuine employment/career opportunities so that young people exiting care can change their futures for the better.

Ensure young people exiting care are well-placed to have and negotiate relationships with their families post care, and in the case of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples, their communities.

Help young parents who have exited care to receive the right supports at the right time, so they are safe and together with their children.



Through the **Skilling Queenslanders For Work – Ready for Work Program**, Village Community Services received funding of \$18,100 in 2018-19 to provide the Skills Life Future Project.

The project helps people get ready for work with training in resume writing, job searches and applications, interview training, first aid training, work experience and more.

Village Community Services has helped 24 people through the project so far and almost two-thirds of these have gained employment or continued on to further training.

When one young participant lost paperwork including his learner licence, driving logbook and resume after relocating due to domestic violence, Village Community Services' on-site Justice of the Peace quickly sorted out the man's paperwork. He now has full-time employment, is working towards his provisional driver licence and is supporting his family to re-establish their lives.



Jodie, a Child Safety Officer on the Sunshine Coast, brought together a number of colleagues and organisations including the Daniel Morcombe Foundation to hold *Styling from the Inside Out*, a program run by Savvy Style and Training for eight young women beginning their transition from out-of-home care to adulthood.

The program aims to teach young women that they have the power to write their own narrative and build healthy relationships with their family, friends and partners. The program includes stuff that a lot of mums do with their teenagers and many of the young women haven't had a mum to teach them. At the end of the course, the women are asked to pick an inspirational quote to share with the group. One of the girls chose:

.....
“Your past is just a story, and once you realise this it has no power over you.”



The next five years

The Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019–23 — The Queensland Government’s plan for helping children, young people, parents and families experiencing vulnerability is a five-year strategy that outlines our approach for the next stage of our ten-year reform journey.

There is growing evidence that the first five years of reforms have laid the right foundations and are on the right track. Over the next five years we will consolidate on what we’ve built. Taking what our partners, families, children and young people are telling us and using evidence, we will refine, improve, strengthen, enhance and hone our responses. By doing this, we will create a more efficient and effective system that puts families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability at its centre and help them to thrive and excel in their lives.

Over the next five years we will continue to focus on supporting families early. We know that our family support services are working and helping to stop families from escalating to the point where they cannot care safely for their children at home. We will strengthen and enhance our early intervention supports to increase their effectiveness and reach so that we can provide tailored support to more families experiencing vulnerability.

In this work we will use a two-generation approach focusing on both the parents/carers and their children and young people to recognise what is working well, address the needs of both and create opportunities that strengthen the family unit and build resilience.

We will also raise awareness in our communities of the needs of parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability and we will, in partnership with our communities, develop strong support networks that they can lean on and draw support from.

“It’s about engaging earlier and steering families down a different pathway.”

(Stakeholder)

Families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability have a range of needs and Child Safety cannot meet all of those needs alone. Families need coordinated responses from a range of agencies from drug and alcohol services to employment and education.

Over the next five years we will strengthen linkages and partnerships across government and the community to take a shared approach to meeting the needs of families, children and young people.

We know that parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability can be caught in a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage that impacts negatively on their lives. Over the next five years, we will work to break this cycle of disadvantage by increasing their opportunities to access education, health and vocational training services so that they can change their futures for the better.

We will take a strengths-based approach towards our children and young people in care and encourage and inspire them to aim high for their future. We will continue to embed our partnership approach with families experiencing vulnerability to enable them to take control of their futures.

The disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children in the child protection system remains the most significant issue we face. Over the next five years we will continue, through this strategy and *Our Way*,¹ to work to drive down the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young peoples in care and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young peoples.

“...it’s important to be part of this movement, assisting in brighter futures for our mob.”

(First 1000 Days Summit participant)

We recognise the importance of belonging and identity for families, children and young people. We will recognise and strengthen connections to family, culture and country for children and young people in care and we will learn from and work with the strengths,



knowledge, culture and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in all that we do. This work will be further strengthened as we embed the principles of *Queensland's Human Rights Act 2019* across our services.

“Feeling connected to culture builds on your sense of belonging — you don’t feel alone.”

(An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child in care)

We want families, children and young people to be at the centre of our family support and child protection system and we want our services tailored to meet their needs. Hearing the voices of our families, children and young people and having them contribute to the design and development of services aimed at meeting their needs remains a key objective. Over the next five years we will increase our efforts to engage with families, children and young people as we adjust and embed the reform program. We will do this through advisory committees and surveys and will explore further options to increase their contribution and control regarding decisions in their lives through legislation.

“Why do people from agencies always have to give me the title ‘foster child’? I’m just a normal person like everyone else.”

(Child in care)

Our workforce, across multiple government agencies and the non-government sector, is a critical component of the family support and child protection system. The nature of child protection work is complex and often challenging, and over the next five years we will continue to support and train our workforce to help them in their roles and ensure we are able and ready to meet the future needs of parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability.

This strategy outlines the actions and initiatives we will take in the next three years to help us meet these objectives and challenges. We will publish regular updates on our progress, including further actions and initiatives we will take as we progress on this next stage of the reform journey.

The strategy

Supporting Families Changing Futures 2019–2023

Our vision:

Queensland children and young people have the right to be cared for, protected and kept safe, and reach their full potential.

Queensland families and communities are empowered to become stronger, more capable, more resilient and are supported by a child and family support system that recognises their rights and understands and respects the importance of family, community and culture.

Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities



Our Way

Law, policy and practice in child and family welfare are culturally **safe and responsive**

Governments and community services are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

All families enjoy **access to quality, culturally safe universal and targeted services** necessary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations **participate in and have control over decisions** that affect their children

Wellbeing outcomes



We want

At home, in care and in the community • Housing

- Government agencies, service providers and communities working together to support parents and families to keep children safe
- More children safe and flourishing at home
- Children in care living in stable care arrangements
- More children in care with their full range of needs met
- Carers better supported and assisted in their care role
- Parents/families better supported to have their children return home successfully
- Fewer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, and disparities in outcomes and experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families eliminated

Mental and physical health • Emotional and social wellbeing

- Children in care healthy and recovering from trauma
- More children in care immunised
- More babies born with a healthy birth weight
- Children in care involved in sporting, recreational and community activities

Early years • Education and training • Employment

- Children in care participating in kindergarten
- Children in care meeting minimum education standards and engaging in learning
- Young people in care equipped to leave care and make successful transitions to adulthood

Self-identity and self-esteem • Culture • Heard, valued, respected

- Children, young people, parents, families and carers are listened to and better understood
- Children in care feel valued and like they belong, with a positive sense of self-identity and self-esteem
- Children in care connecting positively with their culture and knowing their family and personal history

We will work to achieve this through

Sharing responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of Queensland children

Supporting Queensland families earlier

Working better with Queensland families who are in contact with the child protection system

Improving care and post-care for Queensland children and young people

Meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities

Delivering quality services to Queensland children and families through a capable, motivated and client-focused workforce

Building and maintaining an accountable, transparent and cost-effective system

The strategy

Safe, secure and stable

Desired aims:

- **Parents and families experiencing vulnerability are supported to provide safe, secure and stable homes for their children, and are able to access the right connected services at the right time**
- **Communities, organisations and systems are safer for children and young people**
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children are safe, secure and stable within their culture and community**

Actions 2019–21

Deliver an anticipated 145 additional places of affordable housing and wrap-around support over three years for young people who are exiting care or custody. **(DHPW)**

Partner with three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander discrete and/or remote communities to build a coordinated, place-based universal and family support service. **(DCSYW, DATSIP)**

Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision making by extending the Family Participation Program to support parents, families and children working together to solve problems and lead decision-making in a culturally safe space. **(DCSYW)**

Support young people living in social housing who are at risk of losing their tenancies and becoming homeless by funding services that assist people to maintain their housing and maximise their capacity to be independent, self-reliant and connected to appropriate social and community supports. **(DHPW)**

Implement a proactive case-management early intervention plan for individuals and families experiencing vulnerability, commencing in South East Queensland. **(DCSYW, DoE, QH, DHPW, QPS)**

Continue a recruitment campaign to increase the number of foster carers. **(DCSYW)**

Build two new 40-bed youth foyers in identified communities of need and expand the Logan Youth Foyer from 22 to 40 beds to provide housing for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and support them to achieve independence. **(DHPW)**

Implement an initiative to provide improved housing responses to young people in the youth justice system and their families where unstable accommodation is an issue. **(DHPW, DYJ)**

Undertake a project to enhance the placement and availability of suitable care arrangements for children and young people in care. **(DCSYW, DJY)**

Contribute to the implementation of the Queensland *Third Action Plan of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2018-19 to 2020-21*. **(DPC, DCSYW, DoE, QH, QCS, DHPW, DJAG, DCDSS)**

Reshape our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence to improve safety for families and children. **(DCSYW, DATSIP)**

Deliver the Tackle Cyberbullying Grants Program to help tackle bullying online. **(DCSYW)**

Roll-out the Child Protection Joint Response Teams initiative state-wide, to improve agency communication and collaboration, improve investigative outcomes for the agencies and reduce the potential for child trauma. **(DCSYW, QPS)**

As part of the Thriving Communities initiative, explore opportunities to leverage the integrated social service infrastructure of neighbourhood and community centres to improve outcomes for families, children and young people who are experiencing vulnerability, such as integrated service models. **(DCDSS, DCSYW and partners)**

Employ new youth and family workers in Family Wellbeing Services so young people involved in, or at risk of entry to the Youth Justice system, are able to access family-based support focused on their needs. **(DCSYW, DYJ)**

Review the current child safety referral/intake system to improve pathways and increase the number of families accessing family support. **(DCSYW, DoE, QH, DHPW, QPS)**

Deliver a new workforce capability service to provide professional development and better support for Queenslanders working in the complex domestic, family and sexual violence sector. **(DCSYW)**

Explore options to reinforce the rights of children and young people in our legislative framework. **(DCSYW)**

Implement Child Safe principles, standards and initiatives at community, organisational and systems levels. **(DCSYW)**

Continue the Community Connect initiative in 12 neighbourhood centres across Queensland to support families experiencing vulnerability to participate, be resilient and enjoy social and economic wellbeing. **(DCDSS)**

Develop and deliver the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019-2023* to provide prioritised housing assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children and young people, particularly those experiencing multiple barriers. **(DHPW, DATSIP)**

Develop a Queensland-wide strategy to improve the timeliness and quality of investigations and assessment, including IT enhancements and reviewing practice requirements to better reflect current practice. **(DCSYW, QFCC)**



The strategy

Safe, secure and stable

An intervention program developed by Child Safety, **Walking with Dads**, is applying a domestic violence-informed lens to casework to help fathers take responsibility for the harm their violence causes.

By taking a partnership approach, more fathers are being motivated to change and better engage with their partners and children and mothers are more engaged with the program to receive support. The program is not only delivering positive and safer outcomes for children, mothers and fathers, it is building the capability of our staff to assess risk and improve their intervention and collaboration approaches.

“ Mothers who want Child Safety involved and fathers who are thankful for the opportunity to be safer dads.”

(Child Safety Officer)

From 2012 to 2016, the Ryan children — Donny (7), Milly (5) and Tilly (4), were the subject of more than one notification per year in relation to domestic and family violence perpetrated by Sam — their stepfather.

This violence perpetrated against Sasha (mother) continued after the children were taken into care. Through Walking with Dads, Sam took part in Face Up and Caring Dads sessions to address his behaviour and change. Sam now acknowledges the harm he has caused and feels remorse for the pain he has caused his family. Sasha has been reunified with her children and still engages with her domestic and family violence support service. She and Sam are separated and there have been no reports of violence. Sam has begun supervised contact.

In 2016, there were concerns for baby Monty — potential drug use by both his parents and domestic and family violence behaviours by his father that saw his father incarcerated.

Through Walking With Dads, regular Face Up sessions were held with Monty's father while he was in prison, and after his release, Walking with Dads supported Monty's father through several behaviour change programs. Using The Safe and Together Model, assessments and planning were put in place with Monty's parents. Now in 2019, drug use by his parents is resolved, Monty's father recognises his use of violence as a parenting choice and is motivated to be a good father and partner. No further concerns have been reported to Child Safety to date. And Monty will soon have a baby brother or sister.

Queensland Corrective Services funds Save the Children to provide playgroups for mothers who are in custody and their children to build parenting skills and support them to engage positively with their children.

Playgroups operate weekly in Townsville Women's, Brisbane Women's and Southern Queensland Correctional Centres and Helana Jones Centre. Mothers are supported to engage with their children (0–5 years) in a safe, supported environment free of violence, sexual and/or drug abuse with structured play activities appropriate to their child's developmental needs.

Building strong and supportive relationships with family, especially children, is a key component to effective re-integration from prison and reduces the risk of future criminal involvement and generational perpetuation that children of people in custody are at greater risk of.



The strategy

Healthy

Desired aims:

- **Parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability are supported in their physical and mental health, and emotional and social wellbeing**
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and culture is supported as a protective and wellbeing factor**

Actions 2019–21

Provide a range of support, including subsidies, to reduce the cost of participation in sport and active recreation for children and young people who need it most. **(DHPW, DCSYW)**

Partner with government agencies and community organisations to support children and young people, families and carers who are experiencing vulnerability through participation in sport and active recreation; and deliver opportunities to reduce social isolation for people with a disability and older Queenslanders (as a part of *Activate! Queensland 2019–2029*). **(DHPW, DATSIP, DCSYW, DCDSS, QPS)**

Connect children in care to the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and support them with planning and accessing supports under their NDIS plans. **(DCSYW, DCDSS)**

Provide local solutions to support children, young people and families in high need communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by addressing barriers to participation in physical activity, including through Community Active Partnerships and Activation Officer initiatives. **(DHPW, DATSIP, QH)**

Enhance sexual assault and child sexual abuse services to increase access for families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability in priority locations across Queensland. **(DCSYW)**

Invest in female infrastructure solutions that are universally designed and promote equitable access and quality experiences for women and girls. **(DHPW)**

In collaboration with the community, target investment in high need localities for places that are built to maximise physical activity and are designed for all. **(DHPW)**

Expand the Hope and Healing Framework across all care models to support children and young people with their mental and therapeutic health needs. **(DCSYW)**

Deliver targeted immunisation follow up for children in care. **(DCSYW, QH)**

Continue the right@home program in Logan, Beenleigh and Browns Plains catchment area to provide extra help to mothers of new babies. **(QH)**

Implement *Activate! Queensland 2019–2029* — the whole-of-government sport, active recreation and physical activity strategy. **(DHPW)**

Continue and expand the pilot of Navigate Your Health to young people involved with youth justice and add two more pilot sites. **(DCSYW, QH, DYJ)**

Continue to implement 'strengthening health assessment pathways for children in care' to improve health outcomes for children and young people in care. **(DCSYW, QH, QMHC)**

Navigate Your Health is a partnership initiative between Child Safety, Children’s Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service and the Brisbane Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Services that is helping more than 370 children and young people in care get improved access to health checks, referrals and healthcare coordination support.

The initiative was developed in consultation with stakeholders from non-government agencies, Primary Health Networks, Aboriginal medical services, young people currently in care, CREATE Foundation young consultations and foster carers.



Baby Sarah came into care unable to hear. Through the Navigate Your Health initiative, Sarah’s access to an ear nose throat specialist was fast-tracked and she had surgery to correct the problem.

“You won’t believe the different child she is.” (Sarah’s foster carer)

Develop the Healing Strategy, led by the Queensland First Children and Families Board, to support health and wellbeing equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. (DCSYW, QMHC)

Provide redress for people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse to support them with healing and recognising past wrongs done to them. (DCSYW)

Complete the new Adolescent Extended Treatment Centre at the Prince Charles Hospital and two Youth Adolescent Step Up Step Down units in Logan and Caboolture. (QH)

Discover and celebrate the authentic stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families across Queensland, recognising 60,000 years of parenting wisdom, the strengths and their achievements through the Families are First movement. (QFCC)

The strategy

Learning, earning and developing

Desired aims:

- **Children and young people experiencing vulnerability are positively engaged with and achieving in early childhood education, school and vocational education and training, and building skills and knowledge for life and learning**
- **Children and young people experiencing vulnerability develop resilience and are equipped to make successful transitions from school and into adulthood**
- **Parents, families and carers participate in learning and development to keep children safe in their home**

Actions 2019-21

Expand carer allowances to enable 18-year-olds in care to remain with their carer while they complete Year 12 and from 2020–21 expand carer allowances to enable young people to remain with their carer if they choose until they turn 19 regardless of education status. **(DCSYW)**

Continue to deliver the Skilling Queenslanders for Work (SQW) initiative to support up to 54,000 Queenslanders facing barriers or challenges to their participation in skills development and the labour market, including young people transitioning from care, aged 15 and older no longer at school. **(DESBT)**

Continue to deliver the Back to Work Employment Package providing businesses with financial support to employ jobseekers, including Youth Boost payments of up to \$20,000 to businesses who hire an unemployed young jobseeker. **(DESBT)**

Continue to expand Regional Youth Engagement Hubs to reconnect school-age young people, including young people in care, into education, training or employment. **(DoE, DCSYW, Registered Training Organisations and community)**

Develop a whole-of-government Early Years Plan to support parents and children in the early years of life. **(DoE, DPC, QT, QH, DHPW, DATSIP, DCDSS, DCSYW)**

Explore redesigning Next Steps After Care services to ensure young people can sustain tenancies after they transition to independence. **(DCSYW)**

Continue to fund the Triple P Positive Parenting Program to provide parents with positive parenting skills and connect with other parents in the community. **(DCSYW)**

Investigate opportunities for access to kindergarten for three-year-old children, including opportunities for targeted early years programs to support vulnerable three-year old children. **(DoE and Australian Government)**

Develop and implement activities to support *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities, Give all our children a great start* to meet the needs of families and children experiencing vulnerability to support their access and participation in early childhood and care. **(DoE, DCSYW)**

Develop and expand education, training and employment initiatives targeting young people experiencing vulnerability at risk of involvement in the criminal justice system. **(DYI)**

The Department of Education has created collaborative intervention panels across South East Queensland schools to enhance their abilities to respond holistically to children and families impacted by trauma.

The panels bring Child Safety, Education, Training, Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support Services together in a local area to get families the support they need as early as possible to reduce the likelihood of future contact with the child protection system.

“Through these panels we are able to build strong collaborative partnerships which enable schools to identify worries for children and families early.”

(Student Protection Advisor, Department of Education)

In partnership with FaCC and FWS, deliver a targeted Talking Families education program into schools and early childhood services to encourage help-seeking behaviours and empowering parents to ask for and accept help with parenting issues early. **(QFCC, DoE)**

Expand the Education Court Liaison Officers initiative to assist more young people of compulsory school age to engage in education to help reduce youth offending, acknowledging some of these young people are also in the child protection system. **(DoE, DYJ, DCSYW)**

Introduce the Link and Launch initiative in 2019-20 to assist disengaged Year 12 completers to navigate their way back into education, training or employment. **(DESBT, DoE)**

Explore options to increase the number of young people in care continuing their education at university. **(DCSYW)**

Continue to provide the Free TAFE for Year 12 Graduates initiative to young people in the year after they graduate from Year 12 across approximately 160 priority qualifications. **(DESBT)**

Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Mt Isa are securing their learner drivers licence with the help of a partnership between Child Safety, Youth Justice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Young People Ahead.

So far 14 young people have passed their learners through this initiative.



The strategy

Participating, belonging and identity

Desired aims:

- **Parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability are valued and respected for who they are and are supported to have their voices heard**
- **Children and young people in care feel connected to their parents, family, community, culture and country**
- **Parents, families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability have access to culturally appropriate services and care**

Actions 2019-21

Undertake a survey of children and young people in care to ensure their voices and views are heard and used in the design and delivery of services. (DCSYW)

Explore legislative options to strengthen children and young people's voices in decisions that affect them. (DCSYW)

Deliver the Queensland Youth Strategy to ensure all young people are actively supported to contribute to Queensland's economic, civic and cultural life. (DCSYW)

Continue investment in the Finding Kin project to increase connections to kin, community and culture for young people in residential care. (DCSYW)

Increase connections to family for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in care by continuing inter-government collaboration to increase birth registration rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders as recommended in the *Queensland Ombudsman's 2018 report: An investigation into the under-registration of Indigenous births in Queensland*.¹¹ (DJAG)

Establish a Human Rights Implementation Team to lead the implementation of the reforms to support the commencement of the *Human Rights Act 2019*. (DCSYW, DYJ)

Continue to work with the Family Inclusion Network (FIN) to explore and develop ways of assisting parents and kin to advocate for children and themselves on issues that affect their lives. (DCSYW, FIN)

Invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing services to make it easier for families in communities across Queensland to access culturally responsive support. (DCSYW)

Support community-led initiatives to build community capacity around domestic and family violence, including prioritising and supporting community-controlled organisations and strengthening mainstream organisations by including cultural capability as a condition of funding. (DCSYW)

Support young people to maintain and retain their knowledge and information of their life story and continue to innovate the way they communicate and share information with their Child Safety team. (DCSYW)

Through the Youth Engagement Officer, continue to hear from young people about their experience in care and the ways we can improve services and practices they experience. **(DCSYW)**

Invest in care connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin, community and culture to increase the proportion of children and young people placed with Aboriginal kin. **(DCSYW)**

Innovative mobile phone app **Kicbox** provides a safe place for children in care to store their important documents, create life goals, document their thoughts and feelings and record photos and memories.

Through this life story work, children are creating a sense of identity and connection to people, places and communities.

Kicbox has a chat function that provides a modern channel for children and young people in care to communicate with their Child Safety Officer.

Kicbox also connects with our Carer Connect app designed to help foster carers and provides welcome pack information for carers on any new young person to be placed with them, and valuable information concerning important family relationships for the young person or child.



The Office of the Public Guardian supports children and young people to find their voices in matters that affect them, and participate in decisions made about their lives.

More than 140 Community Visitors, who are employed by the Office of the Public Guardian, travel the length and breadth of Queensland to visit children and young people in care, advocating for their rights, interests and wellbeing. In 2017-18, Community Visitors made more than 34,242 visits to 8,607 children. In addition, Child Advocate Legal Officers opened 344 new issues and advocated for children and young people at 633 court or tribunal-related proceedings.

Community visitors also engage with local stakeholders, such as Community Councils and Queensland Police, to support a greater understanding of how each organisation can come together and create a more collaborative approach to benefit children in care.

The Office of the Public Guardian also supports Queensland's families by protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable adults with impaired capacity, not only where the Public Guardian is appointed as guardian but also in relation to those adults residing in certain types of sites and those in contact with the child protection system. In 2017-18, 3,214 vulnerable adults came under the guardianship of the Public Guardian. The Office of the Public Guardian also has extensive powers to investigate allegations of abuse, exploitation or neglect against adults with impaired decision making capacity. In 2017-18, investigators opened 211 investigations into such matters.



Our approach

As we continue to transform the family support and child protection system, we will:

- Work collaboratively across government, the non-government sector and communities in the design and delivery of services that support parents and families, and keep children safe
- Design and deliver services around the need and expectations of children, young people, parents, families and communities, rather than government agencies and service providers
- Support the leadership role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations in the planning, delivery, evaluation and measurement of services delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Build connection to culture, family, community and country into our practices and the delivery of services across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, care and post-care
- Strengthen support for our carers and staff in their roles, and provide them with the tools and training they need to support children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability
- Use data, research and evidence to guide our work, and invest in evidence-based interventions and service models that achieve the best and most sustainable outcomes

Actions 2019-21

Continue to restore and strengthen frontline child safety support services by employing an additional 116 new frontline staff over the next three years. **(DCSYW)**

Continue to implement Partners In Care⁶, in collaboration with Queensland Foster and Kinship Care (QFKC), to provide carers with the training and support they need to care for children and young people experiencing vulnerability. **(DCSYW, QFKC)**

Undertake a multi-year program to implement Unify — a new information management system that will improve how we work with children, young people and families and streamline and improve the way we share information across government and the community sector to increase the safety of children and young people. **(DCSYW, DYJ)**

Provide funding through TAFE Queensland to support residential care workers to achieve legislated requirements to hold a Certificate in Child, Youth and Family Intervention. **(DESBT)**

Undertake an outcomes evaluation to determine whether the reforms are meeting their intended outcomes. **(QFCC)**

Continue to support the Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect system improvement program to improve our coordinated, multi-agency response to children where intervention is required to assess and meet their protection needs. **(DCSYW, QH and other agencies)**

Revitalise Regional Child, Youth and Families Committees and enhance Local Level Alliances to improve shared outcome approaches for families, children and young people experiencing vulnerability. **(DCSYW and all member agencies)**

Through the VET Investment Plan, continue to subsidise frontline child protection staff qualifications, including child protection skillsets in child, youth and family intervention, mental health and youth work diplomas to deliver better support for children and families. **(DESBT)**



Winner of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP) Innovation within the Sector Award in September 2018

Child Safety's Early Indigenous Response Collective Team in Maroochydore and REFOCUS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation have partnered to provide an early assessment and planning response.

The results — a 67% reduction in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families accessing tertiary level interventions in the home and a 14% reduction in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering care on a Child Protection Order.



Work with partners to develop the future of the family support and child protection workforce. **(QFCC)**

Undertake improvements to the child protection litigation model, including the development of measures to increase participation, timeliness and outcomes for children, young people and families. **(DCSYW, DCPL, DJAG)**

Develop a holistic performance management framework to measure the progress and change being made in the lives of children, parents and families experiencing vulnerability. **(DCSYW, DJAG, DYJ, DOE, QH, DHPW, DESBT)**

Continue to advocate for a better deal for Queenslanders experiencing vulnerability with the Australian Government in key areas that reduce risks to children, including housing and domestic and family violence support as well as better support for carers. **(DCSYW)**

Develop and implement the *Queensland Family and Child Commission Oversight Strategy 2019-22* to ensure children and young people's rights, wellbeing and safety are upheld and protected. **(QFCC)**

The **Residential Care Project** in South East Queensland brings together a range of agencies from the non-government and government sectors, including Anglicare, Churches of Christ, Queensland Police Service, Child Safety, Youth Justice, Queensland Health and the Department of Education, to improve outcomes for young people in residential care.

Through the project, agencies have developed a shared language and approach resulting in better outcomes for young people — from re-engagement with education to reductions in aggressive behaviour.



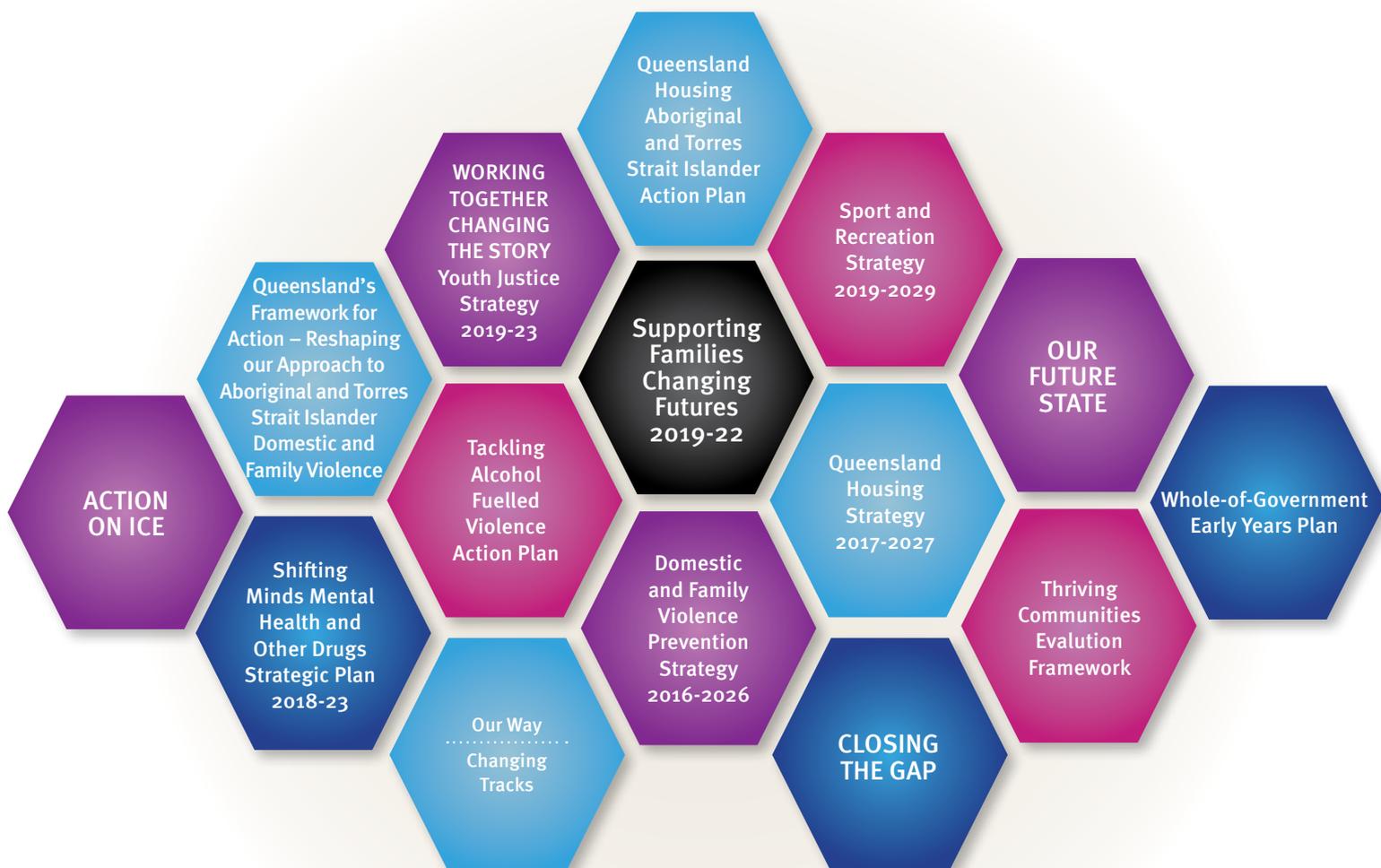
How we will deliver the strategy

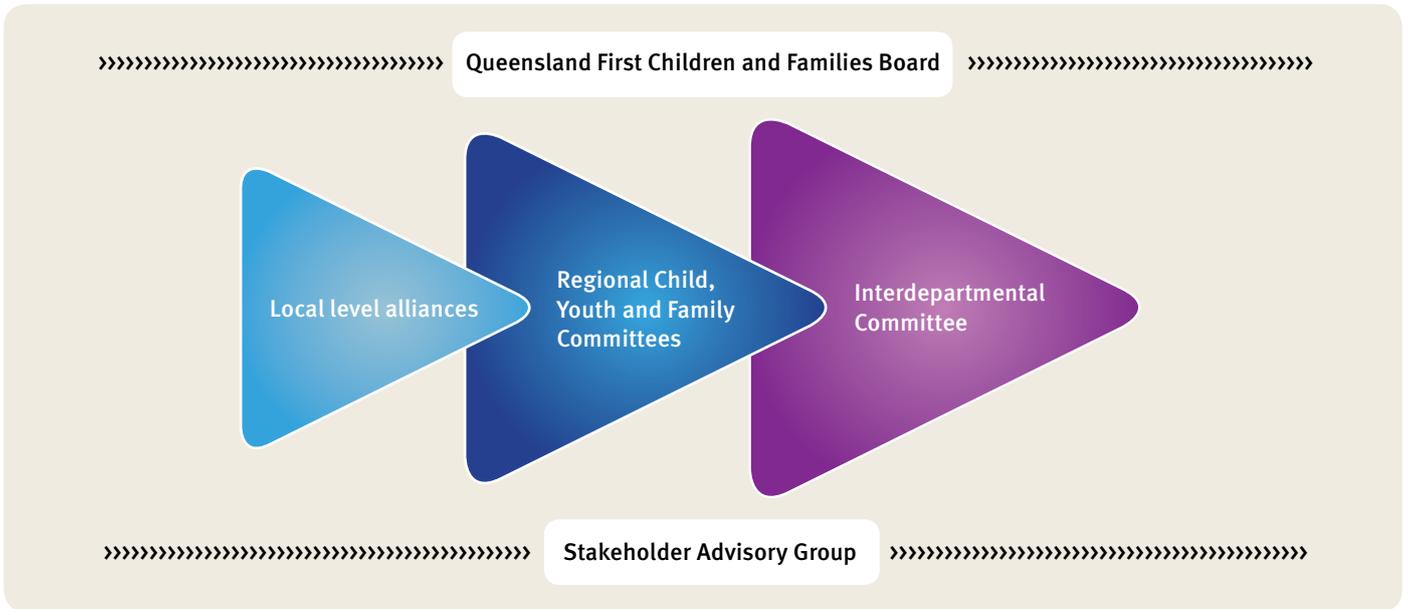
Shared implementation

The Supporting Families Changing Futures reform program recognises the range of positive activities already under way across government and the community, including *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* and a whole-of-government Early Years Plan.

The strategy will be implemented through a whole-of-government shared approach where we link with the goals of other national and state initiatives and leverage their efforts.

By working together, we can improve the family support and child protection system to change futures and break the cycle of disadvantage.





Shared governance

Everyone has a role to play in caring for children and keeping them safe.

We are ensuring local and regional services are a part of our decision-making process through Regional Child, Youth and Family Committees and Local Level Alliances.

Advice on our reforms is also sought from the Stakeholder Advisory Group, who represent children, young people, parents, carers and the community sector.

We are ensuring government is supported with cultural perspectives, community insight and lived experiences through advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders as a part of the Queensland First Children and Families Board.

Together with our sector and community partners, all relevant government agencies are working together to continuously improve connected services and systems to better support families through the Interdepartmental Committee.

Shared accountability

We will use a holistic performance management framework to measure the progress and change being made in the lives of children, parents and families experiencing vulnerability as a result of the actions outlined in the strategy.

We will continue to report to government and the public on the Our Performance website. An outcomes evaluation by the Queensland Family and Child Commission will also be undertaken in the next phase of the reform journey to determine whether the reforms are meeting their intended outcomes.



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 - 9a *Views of children and young people in out-of-home care Report*, AIHW, 2018
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